

Each year we get questions from prospective students/parents of students who are considering applying to MESA but have already finished Algebra 2. Their concern is that they will be wasting their time and will be bored in MESA 9 because they've already had Algebra 2. We are asking for some input from each of you because you are in MESA and have had this experience. Can you offer any advice or feedback to students who are concerned about this? Thanks

STUDENT RESPONSES (totally unedited)

I was briefly concerned about this too, when I realized I'd have to take Algebra 2 again. However, the fact that you take two classes the next year helped make that seem less painful - if you weren't in MESA, you'd still probably take Trig and then Precalc in 9th and 10th grade anyway, and you get three science courses in two years as an added bonus. On top of that, you can always bring up the point that the high school course is almost certainly different and harder than the middle school one, and I certainly have been learning new things this year. I wouldn't exactly classify it as easy or boring, either...

However, in my mind, the point of MESA isn't to take as many math or science classes as possible (though it definitely helps), and it instead acts as an awesome environment to work with people that are really smart and are interested in similar things as you are. A MESA Trig class would be very different than a normal Honors Trig class with just random other people, for many reasons - you have to apply, so there aren't any slackers or people who don't care, the teachers are way better, and MESA is harder and goes more in depth. Finally, MESA also opens the doors for many other opportunities - e.g. all of the engineering/project stuff as an upperclassman, etc.

Just my \$0.02.

-Cole

I also thought about this, and primarily agree with Cole, but would like to add that MESA really integrates math and science in a way many people including me haven't or hadn't seen before. The experience of learning something, say an equation, in your math class and then having your science teacher come next period and say how that equation directly applies to your physics problems. For example, we reviewed the quadratic formula and then immediately afterwards used it in our physics equations to find out how long it takes for an object to hit the ground. This really gives you an opportunity to look at it and see how it all fits together, and being able to do that really shows you the beauty and simplicity of math and science and inspires you to look at formulas you are given in science and say "Why did that happen?" and then be able to look at it a bit more and realize where it comes from. In my opinion, being able to prove why a formula works in science gives you a huge slew of information.

-Will

I agree with the stuff said above. When I first thought about applying to MESA, I thought that retaking Algebra 2 would be a little redundant. I bet the prospective students in this case probably have the same

opinion. They probably think of MESA Algebra 2 as a normal math class, and if it was then taking Alg2 WOULD be redundant, however all of the MESA maths are streamlined TOGETHER, so even though they will be “retaking” Algebra 2 like their schedule says, it’s a completely different experience than the regular honors Alg2 class (I’m pretty sure that was a run-on sentence). I think it needs to be emphasized that learning math in the MESA program is completely different from learning math in regular honors classes, because MESA really dives into the “WHY” or “HOW” of concepts. Plus, since the prospective student has already learned the basic concepts of Alg2, s/he can now spend more time/brainpower on completely understanding the “WHY” and “HOW” that MESA math also teaches, so then they will have a really solid math foundation for upper level math courses.

There’s also the social aspect of MESA. Even though the student might be retaking a math class for just freshmen year, s/he will have the opportunity to become a part of the MESA community, which I think sometimes is even more important than the awesome number of credits we get for the MESA program. Because MESA students are thrown together in two classes, a continuous couple of hours, the sense of community really emerges throughout the year.

As a final statement, I advise the prospective student to not solely focus on the Alg2 issue, but to consider the big picture, because the MESA program offers so much more.

-Willa

I agree with all of the other commenters. I was initially worried that taking Algebra II again would be redundant and pointless, rendering a significant portion of my freshman year useless and boring. However, I decided to apply anyway due to the superior quality of the teachers, and the extra credits earned in Science in 10th grade. Not to mention all the other opportunities that open up as an upperclassmen. And I’m glad I did. In addition to the above benefits, Algebra II taken again has been far from simple and easy, instead it’s been much more in depth than the Algebra II I took in Middle School, and I’m getting a lot out of it. There is no reason to worry about having to take Alg II again, because it all evens out again in 10th grade when you get your two math credits. Plus you get to have the extra science credits, the better teaching, the extra opportunities, and acceptance into the MESA club, which is especially nice when you are coming from a private school (I don’t think any of the public schools offer Alg II in 8th Grade) and will not know very many people at AHS. So, a whole slew of pluses for taking Alg II in MESA again, and not a single con.

-Luke

I, like the rest of these people, took Algebra 2 in 8th grade. Taking it in 9th again helped to make my course load freshman year much easier, but I still felt like I was learning new information. Also, unless you want to lose an elective, then you end up the same place mathematically and you get an extra science credit. Plus Mr. Daly and Ms. Fuoti are awesome, so definitely take MESA anyway.

- Emma
